

## Introduction

WELCOME to this first edition of Three Rivers District Council's 'THREE RIVERS HOMES NEWSLETTER'.

### The purpose of this Newsletter is to:

- inform residents of this district how the Council can help people, including people with housing needs, to find homes.
- provide information on planned housing developments in the district.

### Contributors to this newsletter are from the council's Housing Needs & Strategy team. The main functions of the team are to:

- Reduce homelessness and the threat of homelessness
- Allocate people (including those with housing needs) to social (council) housing properties within the district
- Develop and implement strategies for some people who may require additional support such as the frail and elderly and those with disabilities
- Ensure developers build as many affordable dwellings as possible to satisfy the ever growing demand for homes in this much sought after area whilst preserving our surrounding countryside
- Work with developers, housing associations and our own planners to build decent and energy efficient homes in safe and secure communities

Homes currently owned and managed by the council will be transferred to a new housing association called Thrive Homes next Spring. This follows a successful vote by council tenants in July of this year. The transfer will bring major benefits to these homes as all rent will be re-invested in housing improvements instead of three-quarters of it going to the government which is currently the case. This means there will be some changes in how the council operates, but be assured that we will provide the best and highest quality services for the benefit of people living in Three Rivers.

I would be grateful for any comments, suggestions and feedback you may have about the contents of the Newsletter so please either send them to [homesnewsletter@threerivers.gov.uk](mailto:homesnewsletter@threerivers.gov.uk) or write to Peter Stevens, Housing Needs & Strategy,

Three Rivers District Council, Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth WD3 3SS



### Part of the Housing Needs & Strategy Team.

From left to right:

**Lee Arnold**, Acting Housing Needs Manager;  
**Nicola Barr**, Housing Needs Manager on maternity leave);  
**Patsy Gilbert**, Housing Development & Strategy Manager;  
**Peter Stevens** (editor), Housing Strategy Support Officer;  
**Brenda Stevens**, Housing Advice Officer;  
**Sarah North**, Choice Based Lettings Manager;  
**Nyack Semelo-Shaw**, Head of Housing Needs & Strategy

## Local Development Framework

Some of you may be aware (and indeed been involved) of a Three Rivers publication called 'Planning Your Future' which invited people, businesses and community groups living and working in the district for their views on the planning and management of housing developments in a number of areas of the district. The above publication was produced as a result of a planning strategy called the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF consists of a recently created set of planning documents which sets out the vision, objectives, policies and plans for the district over the next 15 years.

The LDF also sets out how the community will be consulted at various stages of the development processes. The 'Planning Your Future' document was accompanied with a questionnaire asking people in Three Rivers to select and state their preferences and comments concerning developments detailed in the document. The responses were expected by the end of September and later issues of this newsletter will summarise information from the responses. More information on the LDF is available at [www.threerivers.gov.uk](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk)

# Planned Housing Developments

This newsletter will advise inform readers of major or important planned housing developments in the district including current status and expected completion dates if known.



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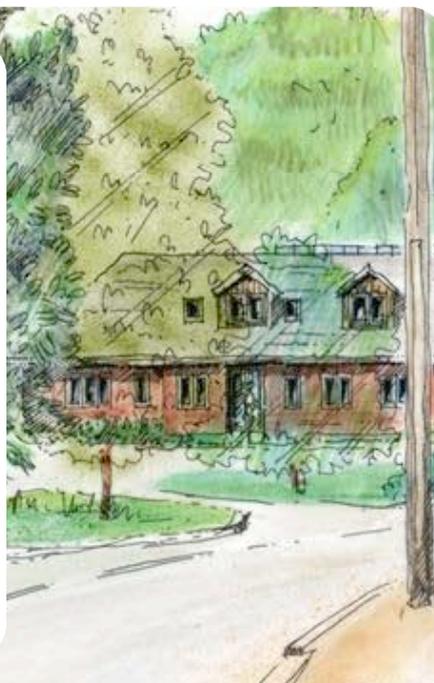
## The status of these developments are:

Scheme(s)	Planned number of dwellings	Planned number of rented/affordable homes	Types of dwelling (Rented/affordable/private)	Planned construction start date	Planned construction completion date	Other comments
Edsom Printers, Hunters Lane, Leavesden	33	10	Rented/affordable/private	-	March 2007	Construction completed March 2007
Gade View Gardens, Kings Langley	34	34	Rented/affordable	TBA	TBA	Awaiting submission of planning application
Gosforth Lane, South Oxhey	12	12	Self-contained rented units	Started	Spring/Summer 2008	Development in progress
Hunton Bridge Wharf	144	44	Rented/affordable/private	Started	Summer 2008	Development in progress
IMC Works, Harvey Road, Croxley Green	40	12	Private/affordable	TBA	TBA	Planning application granted.
OMT (Durrants), Lincoln Way, Croxley Green	130	46	Private/affordable/rented	TBA	TBA	Awaiting submission of planning application
Hillside Hall, School Mead, Abbots Langley	10	10	Rented/affordable	TBA	TBA	Awaiting submission of planning application
Skanska site, Denham Way, Maple Cross,	87	26	Rented/affordable/private	Started	March 2008	Construction nearing completion

## Young Persons Supported Housing in South Oxhey

Three Rivers District Council is working in close partnership with Aldwyck Housing Association to provide accommodation in Gosforth Lane, South Oxhey by Spring 2008 which will give support to vulnerable homeless young people in the District. There will be 12 self-contained flats for residents aged 16 - 25 years of age.

Three Rivers' Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Matthew Bedford said "If we want vulnerable young people to take up their place as responsible and giving members of the community, we must give them the care, support and guidance early on. It's not only common sense; it's the only decent thing to do".



NEWS  
DEVELOPMENT

## The Housing Needs Team



The Housing Needs team of Three Rivers District Council, assists people in the district who are homeless or who are living in households threatened with homelessness. The team also offers housing advice, allocates Council and Housing Association accommodation, manages the housing waiting lists and runs a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

In April of this year a Service Improvement Group discussion was held at Café Nero in Rickmansworth. This meeting, with users of our services, was an opportunity for them to shape a questionnaire which the Housing Needs section wants to send out to households who had approached the section as homeless. The results from the questionnaires have enabled the team to the services it provides.

### If you

- are homeless or are likely to be made homeless
- are aware of anybody at risk of becoming homeless or
- should require any other information concerning rehousing,

**the team will provide advice and help where possible. Please contact the Housing Needs section on 01923 776611.**

## A New Way of Allocating Properties

In 2008, Three Rivers District Council plans to change the way in which it allocates properties to applicants waiting to be housed or rehoused and recorded on the Housing Register. The new system, known as Choice Based Lettings (CBL), is part of a wider Government aim of enabling people to have more choice in where they live. The Government has set a target for all local authorities to operate Choice Based Lettings systems by 2010 and many Councils have already done so.

The key characteristics of CBL is that properties which become available for let are advertised in a variety of ways. These include the internet, leaflets and in places open for the community such as CAB offices. Advertisements will contain photographs of properties with useful information such as the rent details, Council Tax banding and neighbourhood facilities. Applicants interested in particular properties can then register their interest in these by making a "bid" through the scheme. There will be simple rules for

bidding and various ways to bid; by post, telephone, text messaging, emails or through the website. The property will then be allocated to the person who bids with the highest need as determined by our Allocation Policy and assessment criteria, and who is eligible for the property.

CBL enables greater flexibility and options for applicants helped by working with other Councils in Hertfordshire to extend the area of choice even further.

In developing the scheme Three Rivers will be consulting with various groups including:

- Applicants on the Housing Register
- Homeless people in temporary accommodation
- Housing Associations
- Social Services and
- Community support groups.

This is to ensure the scheme will meet the needs of the people who use it.

There is still a lot of work to do and we shall continue to keep you informed of any progress.

# Are you trying to take that first step on to the property ladder?

There are a number of options available to help people to buy their homes especially for first time buyers. The schemes are:

## **New Build Homebuy (otherwise known as Shared Ownership)**

This option is available to people who cannot afford to buy their home outright. In this scheme the buyer can purchase a share of a new property (normally between 25% and 75%) from a housing association and also pay an additional subsidised rent. This is a flexible arrangement whereby the buyer may increase his/her purchasing share when circumstances allow such as an increase in household income.

## **First Time Buyers Initiative**

This new Government backed scheme aims to make more affordable homes available to genuine first time buyers who

are priced out of the housing market. In this scheme, buyers must pay a minimum of 50% of the cost of the home. The remainder will be in the form of a Government assistance which is paid direct to the housebuilder. For the first three years there is nothing to pay on the amount that the government contribute.

After three years buyers will pay a fee to the government as follows 1% in year 4, 2% in year 5 and 3% each year from year 6.

When owners sell their home they will repay the government contribution by way of a share of the sale proceeds.

50% of homes in this scheme will be made available to key workers. The other 50% will be available to other first time buyers.

At present the only site for FTBi is in Watford although there will be other sites in the future.

**For further information on these schemes contact Three Rivers District Council on 01923 776611.**

## Open Market Homebuy

This Government backed scheme can help people to buy a home on the private market, who otherwise cannot afford to buy a home without assistance, who are:

- existing social (council) or housing association tenants
- on housing waiting lists
- key public sector workers (eg. nurses, teachers, police officers)

There are two products available under this scheme. One where the purchaser needs to find 75% of the purchase price and the remaining 25% is covered by two equity loans. One 12.5% loan from the lender where the mortgage comes from and one from the Government. The second product is where the purchaser needs to find 82.5% of the purchase price and 17.5% comes by way of a Government equity loan.

There are no repayments on the Government equity loans until the property is sold or, in the case of a key worker, they leave their key worker employment.